



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FRANKLIN COUNTY WORKING TOGETHER TO FILL GAP LEFT BY FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS

The Franklin County Commissioners, Treasurer and Prosecutor have come together to find a way to fund housing counseling programs that were previously included in federal HUD budget allocations, but were left out this year and aren't included in next year's proposed budget. These programs benefit approximately 900 households in Franklin County and include homebuyer education classes and foreclosure counseling, provided to the public free of charge.

"We needed to find a way to keep this programming available to Franklin County families as it benefits so many," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "Many thanks to our Economic Development and Planning staff, Treasurer Ed Leonard, and Prosecutor Ron O'Brien for helping us find a way to fill the hole left by the Feds."

Commissioners have agreed to amend the 2011 HUD Action Plan to include \$50,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for four HUD-certified counseling agencies at \$12,500 each. These agencies are the Columbus Urban League, the Columbus Housing Partnership, Homes on the Hill, and the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission. The Treasurer and Prosecutor have each pledged an additional \$25,000 of Delinquent Tax and Assessment Collection (DTAC) funds to support these agencies and their programming, bringing the amount each agency will receive up to \$25,000.

"In difficult times, we must work together to protect the most vulnerable," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "I appreciate the eager willingness of Prosecutor O'Brien and Treasurer Leonard to join with the Commissioners in protecting Franklin County families. We hope this counseling will save many homes from heartaches."

"This is our new reality," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "We are going to need to continue to be creative to find ways to fill programming holes that result from federal and state budget cuts."

Even though foreclosures filings in Franklin County are down 18.6% through the first three quarters of 2011 as compared to the first three quarters of 2010, Franklin County still has the second highest amount of foreclosure filings for an Ohio county, behind only Cuyahoga County.

“There is still a great need for homeowners to have access to trusted and reliable resources that our housing counselors provide to help them navigate through the intimidating foreclosure process”, stated Treasurer Ed Leonard. “We want to make sure that the residents of Franklin County get the best and most accurate help and information when going through this difficult time.”

"In litigating the numerous foreclosure cases filed in Franklin County, I saw firsthand the validity of this federally funded program which assisted homeowners throughout the daunting foreclosure process," stated Prosecutor Ronald O'Brien. "In contributing to the gap left by the decrease in federal funding, I can not only assist the public, but potentially decrease the vast number of foreclosure cases, while at the same time easing the Court's docket."

Residents in Franklin County who are in fear of losing their home to foreclosure should call the Homeowner Helpline at 2-1-1.

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